

'JOCK' EARNS WANDERERS A LUCKY POINT

CHAMPIONS Wycombe Wanderers hit back twice to equalise and snatch a share of the Rothmans Isthmian League points against Sutton at Gander Green Lane on Saturday. Both goals had a tinge of luck about them and yet few would argue that the Blues thoroughly deserved their good fortune.

This match, made all the more interesting by the presence of Larry Pritchard in a United shirt, was beginning to look something of an anti-climax as it entered the later stages of the second half. But then, with 20 minutes or so left, both sides produced some exciting football, out of the blue. Wanderers hit back to equalise, then two minutes later Sutton went ahead again. It looked as though Wycombe were set for their first defeat of the term until they came back again with eight minutes left.

Sutton, in fact, could well have done Wycombe a big favour on Saturday for they exposed flaws in the side that had been hidden against both Kingstonian and Slough. This was the first time the defence had been seriously tested and on occasions it looked inadequate.

Skipper Alan Phillips didn't have the happiest of afternoons while Dave Bullock was too inclined to commit himself into the tackle on the flanks. Once again the midfield trio struggled to combine as a unit mainly because Mick Holifield had his hands full in marking Pritchard and was hardly ever seen in attack. Up front, Keith Searle had one of his poorest games for a long time and only in the last few minutes did he produce touches of his best form.

There was at least one success story, however. Graham Mackenzie, surprisingly brought on for Howard Kennedy with 25 minutes left, played a major role in the first goal and hit the second himself, with the help of a deflection. As against Kingstonian, last Saturday, "Jock" was always willing to go for goal and it was this quality that saved his side on Saturday.

By **STUART EARP:** Sutton Utd. 2, Wycombe Wanderers 2

Fielding the same side for the third successive game, Wycombe began well and with the match only a few seconds old they forced a great save from Overton. A six man move involving Reardon, Kennedy, Bullock, Searle, Horseman and Perrin ended with the latter firing in a drive, only to see the goalkeeper fling out an arm to grab the ball from close range.

Micky Fountain robbed Horseman in the nick of time four minutes later but after Wycombe's first corner, when Sutton brought all ten men back, it was obvious scoring goals would be exceedingly difficult.

Then against the run of play, Sutton broke clear to snatch a surprise goal in the 13th minute. Tony Coppin did the spade work when, with Pritchard acting as a decoy, he beat Phillips and crossed from the bye-line. Maskell stayed on his line as the ball came across for Kidd, unmarked, to leap up and nod home.

Wanderers were far from disheartened. More pressure won them two corners in succession and then Horseman fired wide following a Terry Reardon free kick. Another corner followed (one of 11 won by Wycombe compared with one solitary Sutton flag kick) and this time Overton halted Reardon, whose shot was driven hard through a ruck of players. Kennedy created the chance by outjumping Ted Powell and crossing perfectly for Searle to lay the

ball into Reardon's path.

Sutton, who were forced to defend for the majority of this first half, produced very little to worry Maskell. Phillips cleared one flashing shot from Pritchard but two more Wanderers attacks concluded the first 45 minutes. Firstly Kennedy sent in a snap shot which Overton saved well and then Perrin forced his way through the overcrowded goalmouth only to see the goalkeeper parry his shot and save Sutton again.

Wycombe's frustrations continued after the break. Horseman vollied over the top early on but the number of clear cut scoring chances were few and far between.

Then, with 65 minutes gone,

the match suddenly burst into life.

Graham Dennis, put through by Coppin, lashed a shot wide at the far post and then at the other end, "that man" Overton pulled off another superb save. Paul Birdseye, despite losing his boot in the process, curled a shrewd pass across the penalty area to Horseman who rifled in a header. Overton was at full stretch to tip the ball around the post. Seconds later Maskell saved from Dennis at close range.

It was in the 73rd minute that Wanderers hit back to level the scores at 1-1. Mackenzie, who had come on for Kennedy, tried a shot from just outside the box. Preston stuck out a foot to block the ball but sent it right into the

path of Horseman. "Bodger" made the most of the gift to steer it wide of Overton.

Within two minutes United were ahead once more. They won their first and only corner of the match which Pritchard flighted to the near post. The ball was headed on for Preston to nod down across the box. In a flash Dennis had hammered the ball past Maskell and two defenders on the line.

Dennis almost made it three when he bent a clever free kick round the ball — Maskell just grabbing the ball before it crossed the line. Then, in the 82nd minute, the Blues hit back for the second time. Searle shielded the ball well before playing it inside for Mackenzie. Running

onto the pass, Graham let fly with full power and saw his effort hit full back Fountain and curl into the back of the net. Overton, diving the other way to save the original shot, was left helpless.

Fortune was certainly smiling on Wycombe. And yet for all their pressure, they deserved their luck to the full. I just hope they haven't used it all up in one game!

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, D. Bullock; H. Kennedy (sub. G. Mackenzie 65 mins.), T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, K. Searle, S. Perrin.

SUTTON: J. Overton; M. Fountain, E. Powell, M. Preston, R. Bradford; D. Butterfill, L. Pritchard, T. Coppin; C. Proctor, G. Dennis, R. Kidd. Sub. S. McDonald (not used).

Referee: A. A. Isaacs (Barking).

Half time: 0-1. **Goal scorers,** Sutton — Kidd (13), Dennis (75); Wycombe — Horseman (73), Mackenzie (82).